

STOREFRONT for Art & Architecture

97 Kenmare Street New York, NY 10012 212-431-5795

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 29, 1990

ARCHITECTURE IN AN INVERTED FIELD RECENT WORK BY DAN HOFFMAN

Exhibition dates:

October 19-November 17, 1990

Gallery Hours:

Tuesday-Saturday 12-6 pm

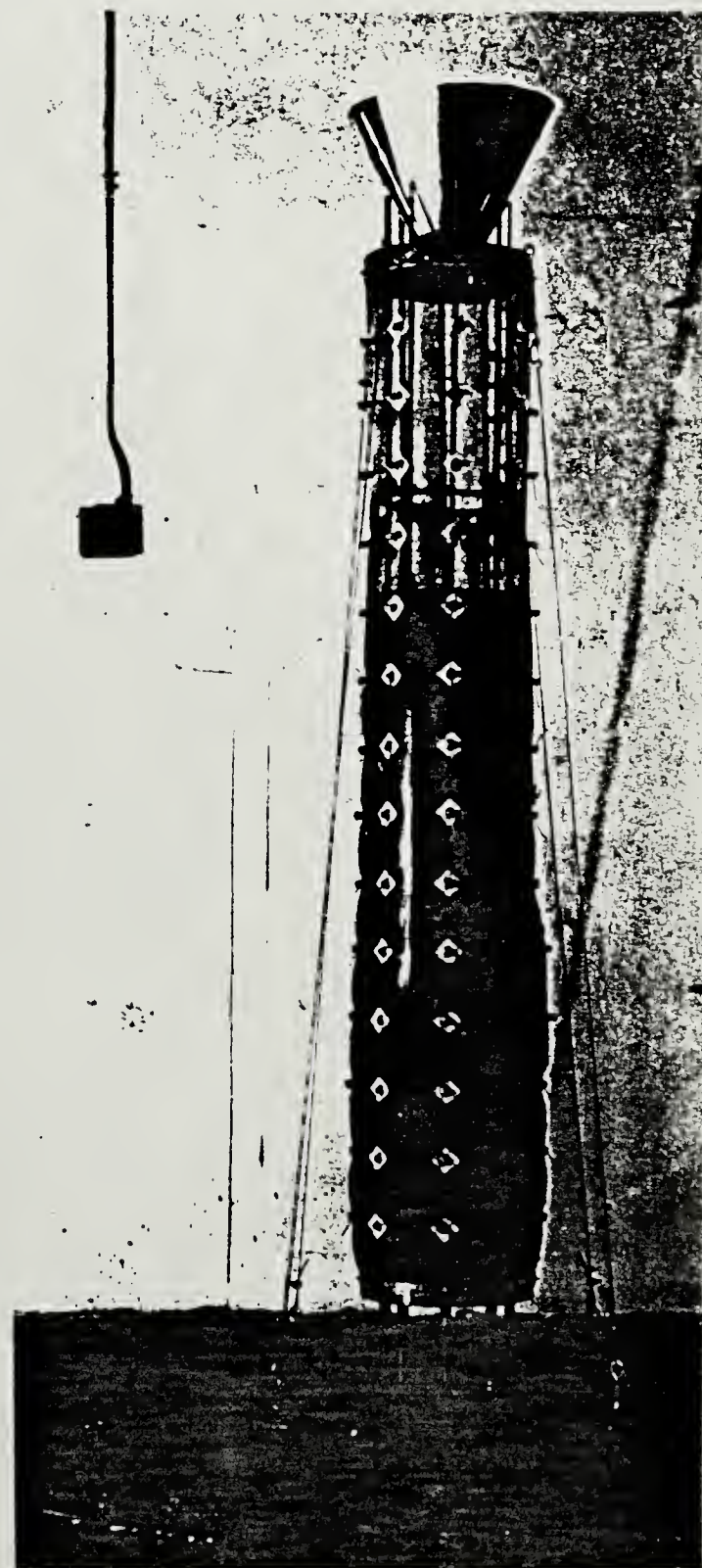
Opening Reception:

Thursday, October 19, 6-8 pm

The works architect Dan Hoffman will present at Storefront for Art & Architecture from October 19th through November 17th are evidence of a reawakened concern with the circumstances of material building process--a concern made poignant by the increasing separation of the architect from the site and the conditions of building.

Hoffman's obsession with the re-establishment of the body's relation to building activity is reflected in six studies he will show in building formwork to contain and direct liquid loads of materials such as concrete, resin, lead, and wax. Of these pieces, Hoffman has said: "The volatility of these materials provides an opportunity for architects to consider building process in a different way. In their metamorphic states these materials can be understood as loads that draw to themselves formworking structures. The result is a built diagram of a relation between the load and the formwork structure, an architecture that demonstrates the forces of its own construction."

In addition to these pieces, Hoffman will present a section of a work, entitled "Vision Without Inversion," as well as photo documentation of the entire process of the work. "Vision Without Inversion" is an experiment based upon the phenomena of retinal



inversion whereby the retina receives an inverted, visual image from the lens of the eye, but the inverted image is perceived as right-side-up. However, when a subject is fitted with special glasses which deliver the image to the retina right-side-up the world will only be perceived very briefly as up-side-down, in apparent demonstration that sight, like any other perception, cannot be isolated from the body. To further investigate this phenomena that underscores the organic relation between object and space, Hoffman designed and tested simple devices to achieve vision without inversion, to perceive the world as suspended between tension and compression. And in so doing, he achieved a "brief understanding of the condition of our ground, a ground that seeks to maintain its structure through experience."

Dan Hoffman was educated at New York University and the Cooper Union, School of Architecture. He is the current Architect-In-Residence and Chairman of the Department of Architecture, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

Simultaneous to the exhibition, an issue of Storefront's serial publication FRONT will be published. FRONT #4 will present another recent project by Dan Hoffman entitled *Reports of Explorations and Surveys of the Thirty Fifth Parallel*.

Dan Hoffman will be present at the opening of the exhibition and available for interviews. For further information contact Storefront (212) 431-5795.

Storefront for Art & Architecture is a nonprofit organization supported by the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, foundations, corporations and individuals.



Out of Architecture

To remain as a discipline, to resist its dissemination by technique, ways must be found to maintain the original relations that constitute architecture. What defines architecture to itself in relation to its surround?

JAMES CATWORTH & TERRY - OFFER

The work of Frank Fantauzzi ~~and his students~~ offers a provocative reflection upon this question. Their method is direct. By substituting building for architecture, an unmediated con-text for the work can be established. In this way architecture is present as the inscription upon the material presence of a building. Architecture is thereby extracted out of building, a dual procedure that maintains the ineffable surface of the original relations within the discipline.

By emphasizing the apodictic presence of architecture as building, the work frustrates the facile reading of architecture as a text. Architecture must be built (or un-built). In the building, architecture is present as the form of working. In ~~our culture this~~ ~~our culture this~~ this "form of working" is governed by ~~a geometry determined~~

~~an idealizing praxis~~

That ^{free} geometry as a ^{infinitely limiting} ~~have~~ ^{applied to building through the notation of drawings}
by an idealization of the horizon and plumb. This

transmissible system of reference can be brought to all aspects of the building work, an ordination that in-forms the actions of building upon material, the texture of the original relations of architecture.

In its manifest presence as (a) building, architecture exists both as an action and a fact. Buildings are built and they remain. As an inhabitant and a maker, the architect is presented with the dual responsibility of action and reflection. In this way the situation of the architect is parallel to Nietzsche's conditional relation of knowing; "...coming to know means to place oneself in a conditional relation to something, to feel oneself conditioned by something and oneself to condition it..." This manner of being permeates the architect's activity. By delivering the ordination to the building, the architect becomes an instrument in the building process. With his explicit tools, the plumb and the level, the architect engages the infinitude of measured relations that become the building, the measured relations that are the distance between the real and the ideal.

The work shown here begins with the stubborn fact of ~~two abandoned houses in the city~~ ^{a found site}. This is the site or con-text for investigation, the "surface for in-scription." The circumstantial opportunities offered by the ~~houses~~ ^{site} are provocations to exact the relations of architecture from the density of the found construction. The resulting extractions are the inevitable result of a confrontation between the given and the current imperatives of measure. In the work, the actions are mediated in such a way as to retain a residue of the con-textural ground; a projected vision is considered as an extraction, the removal of earth an exhumation, the measure of a section an excising. Architecture is drawn towards its origin through an insistent excavation of its body in building. What remains is the residue of the negating process, what Sartre has termed the "Négatités; ... a type of synthesis of negative and positive in which the negation is the condition of positivity." This negative presence explains the haunting absence felt in the photograph*ic* documentation of the work. In the images we sense the architecture that is extracted from the opacity of the material construction, ~~the~~ architecture exposed in the dark light of its own relations.

The silence of the images speaks with the voice of
the architecture released by those remarkable labors,
a voice that carries the breath of its original
sacrifice as building, the condition of architecture's
surround.

Dan Hoffman

4-10-90



No Space

It can be said that the relation between contemporary *architectural* practice and building is characterized by an increasing separation of the two activities. One would now hesitate before designating an architect as a master builder, (or the head of the whole art of building), for the architect's connection to building is now mediated by an increasingly autonomous building industry. Practice is now reduced to the designation of appropriate building systems which are themselves sanctioned by governing authorities and building codes. Drawings are the documents through which the designations are made, and are therefore representative of the very distance of the architect from building activity. Lines on the drawings are not so much geometry as the legal limits of various building systems that are pre-engineered and codified according to the conventions of the building industry. In the realm of speculative drawings the line is considered a notation that seeks to represent the origin of a mathematical relation to phenomena that is the nature of the modern technological condition. These drawings form a critique of this condition, though the distance to building activity remains unchallenged, far from the inevitable work and labor involved in erecting a structure. These remain in their obscure density, the myriad tasks that are required to bring architecture into presence, curiously resistant to the vagaries of language, (and criticism), a mute reminder of all that is behind the surface of discourse.

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here

The work to be undertaken *here* is a re-examination of the activity of architects from that of making drawings and documents to that of thinking and reasoning. All the sites for the work are existing buildings, their built residue of culture, which are then worked over through "reversed" processes such as cutting, removing, excavating and dissection, in an ongoing activity directed towards the excavation of architecture within itself, a way to an entry through the inhabitation of the building through its walls, its floor, its roof. It is here that architects can discover built space. The work of architects thereby remains within the realm of architecture itself. By taking care of the ends of architecture we may find another possibility of its beginning.

Dan Hoffman
March 2, 1990